

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

SPECIAL YOM KIPPUR ISSUE • 5776 • VOL. 6 NO. 1

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A Day of Love, Not Fear

By Yossi Katz

YOM KIPPUR IS not the easiest day on the Jewish calendar. Our Rabbis teach that really, Yom Kippur was supposed to last two days outside of the Land of Israel, much like every other festival. But they saw that this would be too difficult for the Jews to keep. I often take encouragement from this and, as the day progresses, with every passing minute, I remind myself that I am heading towards the finish line. All kidding aside, Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year. It's a day we want to take advantage of and connect with, not one for snoozing.

The idea of sin and atonement brings up the question of God's role in punishing us. We often have the mistaken notion that God waits for us to slip and sin, and then coldly strikes us in an instant spur of retribution. For this reason, Yom Kippur is a dreadful day for many of us and amounts to little more than a mechanical self-defense process.

In *Likutey Moharan* II, 66, Rebbe Nachman explains our being punished as akin to someone attempting to tame a wild horse by pounding it with his fist; he's only hurting himself. When God punishes us, Rebbe Nachman teaches, the punishment does not end there; God is pained together with us.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe ascended to Heaven and begged for forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish people. Moses said, "[If You aren't going to forgive them,] wipe me out." God answered him, "He who has sinned against Me, I will wipe him out." Moses requested that God forgive us for the sake of His great Name, which is associated with our name (see Exodus 32). Moshe was arguing that by punishing the Jews, God would be harming Himself. Therefore we say throughout the Yom Kippur service, "I (God) have forgiven according to your (Moses') word."

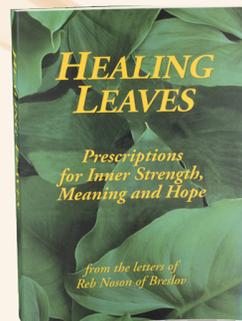
Throughout the *Likutey Moharan*, Rebbe Nachman constantly shows how things that we perceive as punishment are actually being done out of love, in order to bring about our *teshuvah* (repentance) and *tikkun* (rectification). (For example, *Likutey Moharan* I, 6 explains how helpful embarrassment is.) Reb Noson once said, "The Rebbe's whole essence is Rosh HaShanah. Mine is Yom Kippur!" (*Siach Sarfey Kodesh* 1-662). Even as he left the world, Reb Noson was mindful of his mission, repeating again and again, "*Chanun ha-marbeh lislo'ach*—[God is] gracious and abundant in forgiveness." There is hope for all – God will forgive!

Reb Noson taught us that God is a compassionate God. On Yom Kippur, He waits for us to pick up on the cues we are being constantly being sent. As Moses revealed to us, God does not want to harm Himself. This is a day for us to realize the great love that God has for us, and for us to express and regret all the things that have held us apart until today. This year we will become aware of these roadblocks, and we will certainly be forgiven. Amen.

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Even when the gates are closed and locked on every side and in every corner – so that one might mistakenly think that there is no hope, God forbid – I still believe that there remains plenty of hope! For God's capacity to send relief and deliverance is very great indeed, and His power of salvation is inexhaustible! (*Letter #314*)

In the Merit of Uman

By Eliezer Kosoy

EVERY YEAR THERE are different obstacles to overcome [to get to Uman for Rosh HaShanah]. Eight years ago, my wife was due to give birth around Rosh HaShanah. I assumed that I would stay home. But as Rosh HaShanah drew close, I found myself longing for Uman.

My study partner was shocked that I wasn't going. He insisted that I talk it over with a Breslov elder. The elder told me to travel to Uman and not to worry. Everything would turn out fine.

By now it was just three weeks to Rosh HaShanah. I called a travel agent to see if there were any tickets available. He was able to arrange a flight to Uman that would arrive right before Rosh HaShanah and return a few hours after the Shabbat that followed the holiday. Even the price was good!

My wife needed a support system for the five days I would be gone. Her close friend volunteered to stay with her during the holiday. Someone else offered to be on call to take care of our other children should she need to go to the hospital. As all the details fell into place, my wife became more and more supportive of my desire to travel.

Although I was very nervous about the trip, I went. In Uman, I told my worries to one of the Breslov elders. He told me that I can't go wrong if I'm with the Rebbe.

The moment Rosh HaShanah ended, I rushed out to the bus to the airport. A man next to me was talking on a cell phone with his wife. I asked if she could call my house to check that everything was okay. A few minutes later, she phoned back and he said, "*Mazel tov!* Your wife gave birth to a boy." I was in shock!

This birth was the quickest and easiest of all my wife's births. She almost delivered the baby on the way to the hospital. I'm sure it was in the merit of her being so supportive of my trip to Uman.

When I landed in Israel, I went straight to the hospital. My wife had just been discharged and was waiting for me to take her home. The *brit* (circumcision) was held on Erev Yom Kippur. Yehuda Simcha is our first son after three daughters.

*From Rebbe Nachman and the Knights
of the Rosh HaShanah Table*

SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt"l

276. The Rebbe was once lecturing his followers, reprimanding them for not serving God as truly befits Him. After admonishing them, the Rebbe began to make up with them. He drew them close and spoke very gently. He said, "What do I want from them? They are still religious people, are they not?"



The Rebbe then began speaking to their hearts. He said, "You are certainly good people. If God were small like me, your devotion would certainly be sufficient. But God is very, very great! You must gird yourself with a strong desire to serve God properly, for you are serving One 'Whose greatness cannot be fathomed'" (Psalms 145:3). The Rebbe then raised himself and lifted his hands over his head. He repeated the words, "But God is so great . . ." He then lifted his hands, using them to express God's greatness.

277. The Rebbe said that he never as much as drank water before his morning prayers. He was greatly opposed to those who drank coffee and other beverages before praying.

278. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai revealed many lessons after his death. The lessons revealed during his lifetime comprised the first edition of the *Zohar*. It is therefore not surprising that the *Zohar* and *Tikkuney Zohar* explain many sayings of *Amora'im*, masters of the Talmud who lived many years after Rabbi Shimon passed away. The meaning of these sayings was revealed by Rabbi Shimon after his death, during the lifetime of these *Amora'im*.



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Pathways is a weekly publication. To subscribe, please visit breslov.org/pathways. To make a dedication, please email pathways@breslov.org.

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The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman's chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.

Dedicated in the Memory of (L'Ilui Nishmat) Yehudis bat Shimon